## Swinburne Research Bank

http://researchbank.swinburne.edu.au



Jackson, Simon. (2002). Hello again Monaro. Curve. (1).

Copyright © 2002 (Please consult author).

This is the author's version of the work. It is posted here with permission of the publisher for your personal use. No further distribution is permitted. If your Library has a subscription to this journal, you may also be able to access the published version via the library catalogue.



## Hello again Monaro

What's in a name? With the Australian-designed and manufactured muscle car, the *Monaro*, to be sold in the USA badged as the Pontiac *GTO* it is timely to reflect on the symbolism of product brands.

In the early days of the Australian motor industry in the late 1800s, patriotic names were favoured for local cars – *Austral, Australia, Australis, Roo, Shearer* and *Southern Cross*. After WWII, however, conspicuously nationalistic car names were overlooked in favour of numerical and alphabetical model designations and "glamorous" American names often transmitted to us through Hollywood films. The first Holden was simply called the *48-215* reflecting the year of the car's first manufacture, 1948, and the model, no. 215. All very workmanlike for a country recently emerged from war the rigors of war. After that came the FJ and a bewildering array of model designations which responded to no apparent alphabetical order. Consider the following from Holden – the FE was followed by the FC, FB, EK, EJ, EH, HD, HR and HK. Other local car names of were simply borrowed from the American parent company – Ford had its local version of the *Fairlane* while Holden borrowed the rather grand *Statesman de Ville* badge from Cadillac nomenclature and *Caprice* from Chevrolet.

Even British cars appealed to the Australian taste for American names. While in its home market it was known as the Austin A95 *Westminster*, the Australian version of the car, the Morris *Marshal*, was so named because of associations with American military power in the Pacific. Despite this name car was given an Australian touch - a boomerang motif was screwed onto its bonnet!

And then came a change. As multinational companies entrenched themselves in every world market local references were used to legitimize the foreign cultural imports. The British Austin company released an Australian-built *Mini K*, a model designation corresponding with the kangaroo decals plastered on the windows. Austin also had its *Tasman* and *Kimberley* while Morris released the *Nomad*.

Local companies also responded to this new nationalism. The small Australian company Bolwell gave two of its sportscars indigenous words as model names - the *Nagari* and *Ilinga*. Finally, in the late 1960s, Holden suddenly began using indigenous words for their model names. The company's elegant new 1968 coupe was badged *Monaro*. An indigenous word close enough to the American parent's Camaro to serve both nationalist and American tastes. A year later, the word *Torana* (meaning 'to fly' in one of the many Australian Indigenous languages) was applied to the small British Vauxhall *Viva*-based Holden. This car was followed in 1982 by the poorly developed local version of the GM mid-size world car. Even though later models were much better developed, the cars' name, taken from the indigenous word, *Camira*, meaning "bad wind" seemed to doom it. Is this perhaps the first case where a car's badging also provided the buyer with an ominous warning?